

foreign group this substitute may be accepted. The Mexican human sacrifices were of this kind. The people stood around assenting and rejoicing, because the rite meant salvation to themselves and their children. A man who took a captive in war gave him to the priest to be sacrificed, and he might not eat of the flesh, "since the victim was in a sense his son," that is, took the place of his son as a vicarious sacrifice for himself. They also sacrificed their own infants.¹ Child sacrifice expresses the deepest horror and suffering produced by experience of the human lot. Men must do it. Their interests demanded it, however much it might pain them. Human sacrifices may be said to have been universal. They lasted down to the half-civilized stage of all nations and sporadically even later,² and they have barely ceased amongst the present half-civilized peoples.³ They are not primarily religious. They are a reaction of men under the experience of the ills of life, inventing a world philosophy and putting agents behind it, in order to have something, if it be only a delusion, to which hope of escape can attach. Human sacrifices are based on an inference or deduction. There is behind them an assumption as to the character and logic of the superior powers who rule the aleatory interest. It is not until skepticism arises as to this assumption that the usage can be given up.

607. Beast sacrifice substituted for human sacrifice. In the case of Abraham and Isaac, the former was "tried" by God, apparently meaning that he underwent some doubt whether he ought not to sacrifice his son as other west Semites did theirs, and whether a beast would not suffice (Gen. xxii. 7).

For his
 descendants the legend fixed the usage and
 doctrine (verse 1.3),
 different from that of the other west Semites, that
 a beast was a
 due substitute. The Chaldees followed the same
 reasoning.⁴
 According to the mythology of the Egyptians there
 was a great
 destruction of men in the reign of the god Ra, but
 when he
 mounted to the sky he replaced the sacrifice of
 men by that of

¹ Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific Coast*, II, 305,
 308-309.

² Schrader, *Prehist. Antiq. of the Aryans*, 422.

⁸ Hopkins, *Relig. of India*, 363, 450.

* Maspero, *Peuples de l' Orient*, I, 680.